

**July 1, 2010**

**TO: Montana Educators**

**FROM:** Judy Snow, State Assessment Director

**RE:** Phase 2, Pilot Online Formative Assessment Writing Program

**Attached is an application to participate in phase 2 of a pilot of online formative assessment.**

The Office of Public Instruction has done an extensive search for off-the-shelf writing assessment products and services through invitations to demonstrate the products and to participate in panels on writing assessment at state assessment conferences. In addition, OPI assessment staff has attended national assessment conferences in which products have been demonstrated and also cited in research in conference sessions.

During the 2009-2010 school year, OPI contracted with four online writing program contractors to provide services to a group of Montana schools as Phase 1 of a pilot test. The Phase 1 educators assembled a list of positive attributes and determined that use of one of the products be continued in a second phase of the research. The vendor is Vantage Learning, and the product is *My Access*. The purpose of this pilot is to gain further experience with this recommended product to inform future decisions on what functions and features of online writing assessment products and services are most beneficial to Montana educators. Online programs provide immediate feedback to both students and teachers, offer professional development in formative assessment for writing, and record and report student and group data for use by students and teachers. The programs are meant to enhance the writing process and serve as a collaborative tool for teachers and students.

According to the participating teachers and, in some cases students, the following are essential attributes of an online formative assessment writing program and which *My Access* demonstrated well according to the participating teachers who viewed, evaluated, and discussed together all the programs.

- Web-delivered assessment and instructional tool that can be accessed from anywhere
  - Students liked being able to work from home or in the classroom or library
- Instant feedback in the areas of:
  - Focus and Meaning—Cohesiveness and consistency in perspective and main idea
    - Students commented on how their main ideas had improved
  - Content & Development—Content breadth, support of theme, elaboration
  - Organization—Logical sequence of ideas and discourse
  - Language, Use & Style—Word/sentence complexity and variety, tone/voice
    - Students were proud of their active topic sentences.
  - Mechanics & Conventions—Adherence to rules of edited American English.
- Five hundred or more prompts in a variety of genres, including narrative, informative, persuasive, literary (text-based) and expository
- A high number of human scored samples (1200-1500) for any given prompt
- Prompts are aligned with state standards and common Language Arts texts.

- Local prompts may be submitted. When they are submitted and accepted, they are subject to the same technical scrutiny and human scored samples as the other prompts and become available for use.
- Teachers can access submissions to see how students have incorporated suggestions.
- Teachers know what help each student needs and what help the group may need.
- Teachers can interact, differentiate, and tailor individual learning such as one student with clauses and another with dialogue.
- Teachers can check assignments from home and send the student messages or write comments about the assignment for the next time the student logs on.
- Teachers have access to online professional development and workshops.
- Teachers and Administrators have access to a variety of classroom and grade level reports
- Intensive teacher on-site and web-based training is provided.
- Students interact with their own writing—self editing.
  - A tool with these attributes builds writing confidence.
- Program does not do the work for the students but offers support so that students can make decisions on how to improve their writing.
- Feedback from program provides opportunity for student/teacher conferencing.
- Six trait compatible rubric
- Students monitor their own growth.
- Students are engaged/excited about writing:
- **Teacher comment: “. . . the greatest motivator in my 32 years of teaching.”**

We invite your application including your plan to use the program. Your application and signatures indicate that you will follow the pilot instructions, schedule, and outlined expectations. The contract with Vantage Learning enables a broad use of the product in small and large schools across Montana in grades 4-10. Larger schools, please limit your plan to no more than 90 students in grades 4-10. Smaller schools, please consider using the program in multiple grades. Use in multiple grades is an option in both large and small schools.

**Application to Participate  
Phase 2, Pilot Online Formative Assessment Writing Program**

This application is by

District Name: \_\_\_\_\_ School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher (s) and Grade(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted: \_\_\_\_\_, 2010

The purpose of phase 2 of the pilot online writing program is to evaluate the use of a product that was recommended by participants in phase 1. The product by Vantage Learning is *My Access*. Each school may choose a grade(s) (4-10) to participate.

**Application criteria**

Technical capacity: The following is a link to the technical requirements:

[http://browserhawk.vantage.com/bhawk/jsp/MYAccess\\_Requirements.pdf](http://browserhawk.vantage.com/bhawk/jsp/MYAccess_Requirements.pdf).

Please review the requirements and also run a diagnosis of one of the computers students would use to determine if it is compatible with *My Access*. You may access the "Quick Check" at this link: [www.myaccess.com](http://www.myaccess.com)

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\_\_\_\_\_ Please check this box, and enter the date, after you have reviewed the technical requirements and determined that your system and computers meet those requirements. If you have any questions or need assistance, please contact Karen Richem, [krichem@mt.gov](mailto:krichem@mt.gov) or 406-444-0748.

After a positive technical requirement review, the following must be agreed upon and committed by the district, school, and teacher(s):

- Designate a manager for the program.
- A representative each from district /school administration as well as the teacher(s) involved in the program will participate in training and other professional development sessions either in district or by webinar. Renewal units will be available for the sessions which will include:
  - An introduction and overview of the program and description of roles of administrators, teachers, and IT staff involved in the program.
  - Hands-on training for teachers using the program.
  - Continuous professional development in the use of the data for formative assessment.
- Provide time for all students in their participating classes to use the program bi-weekly or more in a computer lab or in classroom, satellite, or team lab.
- Participate in a panel at the state assessment conference in Billings in January 2011.
- Complete regular evaluations and questionnaires and participate in conference calls.
- Participate in developing recommendations for the Board of Public Education in July 2011.

Tentative Timeline

NOTE: Training schedule is not included in this timeline.

<b>July-September 10, 2010</b>	<b>Call for applications</b>
<b>September 13, 2010</b>	<b>Application deadline: signed original must be received at OPI by 5pm. Office of Public Instruction Attn: Gayle Allen PO Box 202501 Helena, MT 59620-2501</b>
<b>October 1, 2010</b>	<b>Awards announced</b>

October 2010	Training and implementation begin.
December 2010	Conference Call
January 2011	Complete online evaluation Participation in assessment conference
February 2011	Evaluation: format TBA
March 2011	Conference call
April 2011	Evaluation: format TBA
June 2011	Conference Call. Purpose: Recommendations to BPE and plan presentation

**In the space below, please provide a brief description of your plan for participating in this program.**

**Complete and return this application to the address below (the signed original) by 5pm on September 13, 2010 if your district and school would like to participate in the writing program.**

**Office of Public Instruction  
Attn: Gayle Allen  
PO Box 202501  
Helena, MT 59620-2501**

**The following information and signatures are required for your application to be considered. Signing indicates that, if selected, your school, and teacher(s) will fulfill the requirements.**

Program Manager/Contact Person

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Title\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email account that is accessed daily\_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Information

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Grade\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email account that is accessed daily\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Information

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Grade\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email account that is accessed daily\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher Information

Name\_\_\_\_\_

Grade\_\_\_\_\_

Phone\_\_\_\_\_

Email account that is accessed daily\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal/Authorized Representative Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Manager Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Teacher Signature